

# Moroccan University Students' Online Reputation Management

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## Abstract

Online reputation management (ORM), a component of e-marketing, has grown so fast over the past few years and has become increasingly significant to internet users. The permanence of the content generated on the net, mainly on social networks, has become a huge issue to consider. Because they live in this digital age, digital natives have a major responsibility in the way they create content and handle their reputation online long before beginning their job hunting. To clarify the matter, this paper explains through a review of the literature, the relationship between online reputation and social networks. To examine this issue locally, this study was conducted among college students in Casablanca. It aims to explore basically how they use Facebook and to what extent they are aware of the digital footprints that are kept on the net. A complementary study has been conducted among Moroccan employers to explore how they use social networks to screen candidates' job applications.

**Keywords:** Web 2.0, Social media, Social network, Digital identity, User generated content, Online reputation management

## 1. Introduction

Online reputation management (ORM) has mostly developed with the rising of Web 2.0 and the growing enthusiasm for social media websites. Web 2.0 "actually refers to websites and web applications that facilitate interactive information sharing, interoperability and user-centered design" (Taylor, 2010, Introduction section, para.2). Social media on the other hand, is defined as "any form of online publication or presence that allows end users in multi-directional conversations in or around the content on the website" (Onlinematters.com). Consequently, Web 2.0 and social media websites combined have revolutionized the sharing design patterns into one -to-one sharing , one-to-many sharing, many-to-many sharing, and many-to-one sharing; thus transforming the nature of communication altogether (Taylor, 2010, para.3). Undoubtedly, Web 2.0 has marked the beginning of the user-generated digital content (Ivester, 2011, Chapter 3, Open Authorship section, para.6), and never before have specialized companies made such huge profits out of users' social networks content by making it technically very easy to create, manipulate and change (Ivester, 2011, Chapter 5, Careless Content Creation section, para.6).

*Social media has become integral to millions of people's lives and mainly students' lives.* Among those social media websites which are the most used, Facebook remains undeniably the one that has the most significant impact on the life and reputation of college students. It was launched in 2004 on college campuses and continues to flourish there. According to a research conducted by Online Education, 96 % of the students in the US use Facebook (Rucker, 2011, para.1). However, if social media has had a huge influence on students, it also has a major impact on their future employability. Human resources (HR) is one of the main fields that have strongly benefited from such social media explosion in general, and social networks in particular. The latter has revolutionized the job market by increasing the speed of the hiring process and reducing the cost of tracking quality talents and graduates.

To screen potential job candidates, hiring professionals started years ago exploiting social networks like MySpace and Facebook to delve into the lives of candidates in order to know more about them, their behavior and their reputation. Thus, a survey carried out by CareerBuilder.com in 2008 involving more than 31,000 employers revealed that one in five employers used social networks to hire candidates. 24% of the hiring managers surveyed hired candidates based on the content they found on their profiles. Whereas, one third of the hiring managers surveyed rejected candidates based on information they found out in their social network (Havenstein, 2008, para.4-5). Furthermore, to refine their research on the reputation of their future recruits, today's employers go beyond social networks and Google search. They use people search engines such as 123people, ZoomInfo, Wink, Pilp, Spock, to name but a few, which aggregate information from all the multi existing sources on the net and present it all in logical chunks to the user.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is, firstly, to show through a review of the literature how internet users' digital footprints shape their digital identity and forge their online reputation. Secondly, it shows that what lies behind the danger of internet and social networks above all is the content's permanence issue. Thirdly, this paper presents some research findings of hiring professionals in the US and Europe. They confirm that social networks and online reputation management remain closely related and keep trending up. Finally, to examine the relationship between social networks and online reputation in Morocco, this paper presents the findings of the study we have carried out among college students and recruiters in Casablanca.

## **2. Digital Identity**

Collectively and without being aware of it, all the content that internet users create and share together on the net becomes their own reputation (Ivester, 2011, chapter 5, Key Takeaways section, para.3), which in turn becomes nothing but a reflection of their digital or online identity. According to a research conducted in 2007, this special form of identity is made up of the user's online presence also referred to as digital footprint that is a mixture of passive and active digital footprints. Layered on top of the passive digital footprints are databases containing information such as name, phone number, address, interests, profession, political affiliations, etc. This makes personal data accessible online without any intentional intervention from the user. The active digital footprints, on the other hand, are all the traces of data that a user contributes voluntarily through deliberate posting or sharing of information, placing an order from a mail-order catalog, filling out forms or contributing to a social or political cause. The user usually operates at a particular time and in specific contexts with a target audience in mind but, fortunately or unfortunately, this digital data ends up being exposed to anyone for years after being posted (Madden, Fox, & Vitak, 2007, pp. 3- 4).

The digital footprints are not only the articles, reviews, videos, photos, opinions, tweets, the "likes", comments, and all the sharing on private and professional social networks that the user sprinkles over the web, but also everything that others submit positively or negatively about the user and share with him/her or with others about him/her. Google simply states that, "your online identity is determined not only by what you post, but also by what others post about you- whether a mention in a blog, a post, a photo, tag or a reply to a public status update," (Tuerk, 2011, para.2). All these fragmentary elements make the digital identity very special for it doesn't belong only to the user but to the community as well (Fillietaz, 2011, p.11).

Besides the user and the community, digital identity is first of all managed through a computer interface connected to a network. It is the sum of the technical tracks including IP address, search engines, research on the web, cookies, browser, visited sites, etc. In order to make their sites available to the user, all websites must keep the IP address and obviously maintain a record of those IP addresses. If the system can help identify fraud, for example, it serves primarily to identify users (Fillietaz, 2011, p.8). Because our personal data are no longer personal, anyone can be watching us and with powerful anonymity can have an edge on us. Consequently, anonymity has become a myth; even anonymous users can be "traceable". There are obviously endless examples around the world, but a striking one that comes to mind is that of a student at Loyola Marymount University who posted an anonymous shooting threat to Juicy campus, and found himself thanks to the IP address within hours arrested and charged with a felony (Ivester, 2011, chapter 9, Advice for Cyberbullies section, para. 2). The most recent example in Morocco is that of a high-school student who, during the first round of baccalaureate exams for the year 2012, leaked exam papers on Facebook minutes after the start of the exams and unsurprisingly got arrested and expeditiously brought to justice (Arbaoui, 2012, para. 1-5).

With or without deliberate intervention in creating digital content that can be exchanged and might be exposed on the net and used by known or anonymous party, the most challenging characteristic of internet is the permanence effect of the content which will stick to the users' identity for a long time and most probably forever. Tim O'Reilly the initiator of the expression Web 2.0 saw eighteen years ago that "one important future thread in the WWW was having nothing to do with marketing, selling, or other commercial activities, but just the way that individuals create a persistent identity for themselves in cyberspace", (Madden, et al, 2007, p.1). Years later, with the explosion of social networks, the persistence of content and identity has become a primary concern for parents, schools, universities, businesses, politicians, etc. In a visit to a high school in Virginia, President Barak Obama could not offer better advice than reminding students to be wary of Facebook and think carefully about their socially-networked content, " Be careful what you post on FaceBook. Whatever you do, it will be pulled up again later somewhere in your life", (Matyszczyk, 2009, para.4). Obviously, what lies behind the danger of Internet and social networks in particular is the information's permanence issue. It is, indeed, Internet's most powerful attribute and because of this it is closely related to the online reputation management issue (Ivester, 2011, chapter 3, Permanence section, para.1).

## **3. Digital Natives**

Historically, nations have witnessed their reputation model handed down smoothly from generation to generation and it has been quite natural that every new generation brings along with it its new concept of reputation just as it brings along with it its new needs, wants, desires, language register and new communication styles. Before the digital age, each new generation explored its reputation concept in a way that was not too unfamiliar to the preceding one. Despite the generation gaps, consecutive generations still shared some values and could live in harmony because the gap was considered natural and understandable. Baby boomers and generation X, for instance, have had this kind of experience. Today's Net generation or digital natives are technologically savvy and extremely demanding, they are changing the world and exploring it in a way completely different from the boomers or Xers now called digital immigrants (Prensky, 2001, pp.1-4). Accordingly, digital natives have brought a new generational digital reputation concept that obviously no other generation has experienced before. Solove (2007) goes even further to consider boomers, Xers and digital natives

as the Google generation and if anyone wants to know about someone's reputation, they don't have to hire an investigator, but just go to Google (Chapter 1, Generation Google section, para.1).

The digital age has altered the rules for life and has devised a new concept for reputation, i.e. the online reputation. Henceforth, in addition to the offline reputation known by previous generations, "the evaluation of the online reputation of a person is based on his or her behavior, what he or she posts, and what others (such as individuals, groups, and Web services) share about the person on the Internet", (Online Reputation in a Connected World, 2010, p.3). Most dangerously, the digital age has given digital power to anyone to scar or embellish an individual's or a company's reputation in such a way that in just a few mouse clicks a reputation can be beautifully created or awfully destroyed. Indeed, this power can be perilous if information goes viral as "the amplification starts when one user copies bad information to a "Web 2.0" sites, that website automatically spreads it to others, and then another user repeats the process –the cycle repeats uncontrollably until the false information has been distributed far beyond where it should be" (Fertik, & Thompson, 2010, Chapter 1, The Machine is Amoral section, para.6). This power is not only threatening individuals but companies as well. Jeff Bezos, the founder of the renowned online bookstore Amazon, famously said in 1996 "*If you make customers unhappy in the real world, they might each tell six friends. If you make customers unhappy on the Internet, they can each tell 6,000 friends.*" (Stirtz, 2009, para.1)

Nowadays, those digital natives or Google generation are the first college students who have grown up immersed in digital technologies with an unlimited instant capacity and facility to communicate with the world. Unlike digital immigrants, what to communicate is not as important for them as how they communicate it (Cunningham, 2007, para.6). They are born with Internet, have grown up technology multitasking using PlayStations, laptops, cell phones, digital cameras, Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, etc. They have no difficulty adapting quickly to their digital environment. Mark Prensky in his famous article "*Listen to the natives*" states that digital natives actually have:

... a much better idea of what the future is bringing than we do. They're already busy adopting new systems for communicating (instant messaging), sharing (blogs), buying and selling (eBay), exchanging (peer-to-peer technology), creating (Flash), meeting (3D worlds), collecting (downloads), coordinating (wikis), evaluating (reputation systems), searching (Google), analyzing (SETI), reporting (camera phones), programming (modding), socializing (chat rooms), and even learning.(Prensky, 2005, p.2).

Because so much is available to digital natives, they face a big challenge today. They are not free to operate as they like, and should be very careful in the way they handle their online activities. Any "*faux pas*" may have dramatic consequences on their future, particularly, their employability.

#### **4. Recruitment and Online Reputation**

On its 4<sup>th</sup> annual Data Privacy Day Microsoft released a report summarizing its commissioned online reputation survey conducted in 2009 where human resources professionals and hiring managers interviewed approximately 275 recruiters and about 330 consumers in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The study aimed at exploring the attitudes and examining the impact of online reputation on consumers and hiring professionals. 70% of U.S recruiters and HR professionals surveyed admitted their companies used online to screen candidates and stated that they rejected candidates if they found information online. Whereas 85% among U.S. recruiters and HR professionals surveyed said that positive online reputation had a positive influence on their hiring decisions (Online Reputation in a Connected World, 2010, p.3). Similarly, a CareerBuilder survey conducted in 2009 involving more than 2,600 hiring managers and human resource professionals revealed that 45% of employers used social networking sites to screen potential employees, compared to only 22 percent of employers the year before. 29% of employers used Facebook, 26% used LinkedIn and the remaining 21% used MySpace. Likewise, it is interesting to note that 11% screened blogs while 7% of employers followed candidates on Twitter (Haefner, 2009, para. 3). Similarly, CareerBuilder conducted another survey in 2012 and confirmed that the trend of screening potential candidates through social networks was increasing. Nearly two out of five companies used Facebook representing about 65%, LinkedIn 63% and Twitter 16% (CareerBuilder, 2012, section 1).

According to a Jobvite social recruiting survey conducted online in 2012 with over a thousand HR and recruiting professionals across the globe, recruiting through social media was trending up. 92% of the respondents admitted using or planning to start using social networks and social media for recruiting. 73% of the respondents hired a candidate that was identified in a social network or a social media. 89% of the respondents hired candidates through LinkedIn, 26% used Facebook, and 15% of the respondents hired candidates through Twitter. It is interesting to note that 89% of the respondents had a look at the social profiles of the candidates (Jobvite, 2012, para.2). On the other hand, RegionsJob the first private employment site in France conducted a second national survey on Employment and social networks in 2011 among a total of 2,526 candidates and 379 recruiters. The survey revealed that 49% of the respondents used social networks in the hiring process. 44% of HR professionals surveyed screened the candidates' profiles. 8% of HR professionals ruled out candidates because of negative information they found on their social network profiles. Conversely, 8% of the respondents hired candidates due to positive information they found online about them (Raffestin, 2011, para.1-11).

Likewise, according to a 2011 survey released by Reppler, a Palo Alto-based social network monitoring company, where 300 hiring professionals were surveyed on job recruiters screening job candidates on social networks, 91% of employers admitted using social networks to screen job hunters' profiles on a social network as part of the hiring process. Facebook came on top with about 76%, followed by Twitter 53% and LinkedIn 48%. Incidentally, 69% of the

recruiters admitted having rejected candidates based on their screening process, while 68% hired candidates due to their social network profile (Swallow, 2011, para. 2-6). OfficeTeam surveyed recruiters in Germany, France and Netherlands on whether they would refuse highly qualified candidates holding excellent CVs if they found out embarrassing information about them on social networks like Facebook, Twitter or “Copains d'avant”. It was reported that 32% of French recruiters would automatically rule out a candidate's application and 38% would require the candidate to explain the details found about him/her on the social network (Taupin, 2012, para.6).

With the various figures mentioned above, college students who are tomorrow's job candidates should be concerned with their reputation online. In Morocco, young people aged 18-24 are the primary Facebook users, and despite the increasing popularity of this social network within this segment of population, no study has been done yet to shed light on the issue of online reputation management by students. The only survey conducted so far in the academic circle dealt with students' identity formation in online communication and has completely neglected the issue of their online reputation (Simour, 2010, pp. 32-34). Therefore, our study attempts to explore how our students use social networks and whether they are aware of the online reputation management concept. It also aims through a complementary study conducted among Moroccan HR to explore how they use Facebook users' profiles to select candidates. Before exploring both questions, it is interesting to recall how Internet and social media have sprung up to be part of Moroccan students' daily life.

## **5. Internet in Morocco and the MENA Region**

Morocco is among a few African countries that have known a rapid growth in Internet access. According to the most recent Internet usage statistics for Africa, it ranks among top Internet countries in Africa just behind Nigeria and Egypt. Internet users in Morocco have reached 16,477,712, representing 51,0 % of the population (32,309,239), (Internet World Stats, Africa Stats, section 4, 2012). This is not a coincidence since the Moroccan government considers the telecommunications sector a key element to the growth of the Moroccan economy and society adding millions of dollars to GDP and creating new jobs in the country. It has fulfilled, particularly, in the field of information technology (IT), huge ambitions through a national strategy for information and digital economy called “Digital Morocco 2009-2013”. This national strategy was launched in 2009 by the Ministry of Industry, Trade and New Technologies, and it aims to make information technology a cornerstone of the economy. Its main purpose is to make high-speed Internet access available nationwide by 2013 (Constant, 2011, p6-p15). This national strategy made the number of people connected to the Internet rise to around 49% of the population, thus representing one of the highest rates in North Africa according to the international bureau for economic intelligent “Oxford Business Group” (Arab Science and Technology Foundation, 2012).

The field of education has been a top priority in this strategy by equipping and introducing IT programs in some state schools and universities intending to generalize them all over the kingdom by 2013. College students have been at the core of this strategy through a program called “Injaz” (achievement) which is among the highlights of digital Morocco 2013. Initially dedicated to engineering and Master students, this program plans to equip all college students over five years with hardware and a 3G (Third Generation mobile telecommunications system) Internet subscription funded up to 85% by the Moroccan government (Bentaleb, 2011, para. 1). According to the first sociological study conducted so far in Morocco analyzing the relationship between youth and Internet on a sample of 900 male and female respondents both in rural and urban areas, the promotion of IT and Internet in particular has altered Moroccan society at large (El Harras, 2011). Traditional socializing is now replaced by social networks, with the number of Facebook users increasing to 5,091,760 as of 31 December, 2012 (Internet World Stats, Africa Stats, section 4, 2012). Although this figure seems to be very marginal and may reveal that Internet is still not accessible to a large fraction of the population, its impact on Moroccan society is very tangible and shows that youth's access to Internet is clearly shifting traditional paradigms of life and socialization in the country.

Compared with the MENA region, Middle East and North Africa, Morocco with over 15 million users ranks among top five Facebook country markets with only Egypt ranking higher. According to the Middle East and North Africa Facebook Demographics Report, 17% of Morocco Internet users use Facebook. The report states that “Morocco has the third largest Facebook community in MENA and after Egypt, it has the second largest number of Facebook users under 25 years of age, accounting for 67% of its total community” (Malin, 2010, p. 10). Facebook population in Morocco is basically young with the female population representing 38% and the predominant male population representing 68% of the users in the country (Arab Social Media Report, 2011, p. 13), which is not surprising at all given the rate of illiteracy among girls in the country.

## **6. WEB 2.0 in Morocco**

The popularity of Facebook has increased along with the emergence of Web 2.0. Among the youth a new wave of active users has emerged using Web 2.0 as a means of expression and freedom. It has become the new media through social networks like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube , and blogs called “Blogoma”. This term was coined by a young Moroccan blogger in 2005. It started gathering people who wouldn't express themselves in traditional print media, which is too outdated and unbearably subject to the government's censorship in their opinion. With the advent of Web 2.0, not only individuals but companies as well have found themselves in constant agitation, jostled by huge unlimited amounts of information springing up from all sides, internally and externally. Just like other countries in Europe and the US, the Web 2.0 has so much challenged habits and behaviors and has led to the creation of new jobs such as the community manager, new tools such as the corporate social networks, and new consulting businesses such as the agencies of online reputation management.

Bygone are the days when Web 1.0 gave exclusive power to Moroccan journalists to develop their content and present it to Moroccan passive users on the net as they wanted them to read it. Over are the days when Web 1.5 made readers happy to leave at best a comment or a question to journalists who would answer at their own pace. Web 2.0 has come up with a much more dynamic level and interconnected user interaction that Internet users could have never thought of even in their remote imagination. Therefore, blogs, wikis, social networking sites have grown at astonishing fast rates allowing Moroccan users just like others around the world to start posting their own thoughts, own videos, photos, build and customize their profiles to communicate internally and externally on the Web. A huge unlimited web interaction has started springing up producing "online communities" who made it even easier to share uncontrolled information on the Web.

With Web 2.0, publishing has become easier, within reach and more democratic than ever. Most importantly, it has allowed a new wave of Moroccan growing "netizens" to change the long-lasting stable public sphere that was just a decade ago considered almost untouchable. Web 2.0 has given social and political power to the "20 February youth movement" that has shaken up the government and the State altogether, and has led to unexpected constitutional amendments. Yesteryear's stifled voices start raising as the average person, the average employee as well as the average student can now make his/her voice be heard by providing and distributing content on the net through publishing and sharing news, photos, videos and life updates. The average user can publish a new post on a blog, take a picture on a cell phone and upload it to a social network in a few mouse clicks and in no time.

As university professors, we observed this social media explosion among students firsthand especially as they get close to graduation and begin searching for employment. That's why we have conducted an empirical study to explore how they use social media with a particular focus on Facebook. More specifically, the objective of our study is to explore how students at the university Hassan II Ain Chock in Casablanca have access to Internet, which social networks they use, and the reasons for using them. It aims mainly to explore how those college students manage their reputation online. Before starting our study we predicted that: firstly, Morocco's government commitment in promoting ICT encouraged the use of internet among students. Secondly, we predicted that students used more and more social networks, mainly Facebook, as a means of communication. Finally, based on recurrent cyberbullying problems occurring among university students because of personal information they post on each other on Facebook, we assumed that they were not aware of the importance of the online reputation.

However, this study could not be comprehensive without another one conducted among recruiters. As very little research has been done in the field of social networks and employment in Morocco, we supposed that hiring professionals did not use social networks in their hiring process. We also predicted that they did not incorporate the online reputation factor in their hiring decision. Therefore, our purpose is to explore whether Moroccan recruiters use social networks' profiles, particularly Facebook's, in their hiring process, and whether they incorporate the online reputation factor in a candidate's selection. It should be noted that the survey was designed to target mainly students, and the survey addressed to recruiters aimed only to complement collected data, assuming that the results we would get from students' study would serve a further in-depth study among recruiters.

## **7. Research Methodology**

To achieve the objectives mentioned above, we opted for the sample survey that seemed most appropriate to us. To conduct this survey and collect relevant data, we targeted two types of groups. First, a sample of 800 students belonging to the University Hassan II Ain Chock in Casablanca. They were studying in the faculty of economics, the faculty of sciences, the higher school of technology, and the national higher school of electricity and mechanics. They filled in 500 questionnaires over a period of two weeks for a response rate of 62.5%. Then, recruiters in 100 companies located mainly in Casablanca, 50 of which filled in the questionnaires, for a response rate of 50 %. Both samples were composed according to the method of a priori sampling which consists of selecting individuals who are believed in advance to possess information that is crucial to the study. Afterwards, we devised two questionnaires, one per target. The first one, designed for students, was broken down into four topic areas: internet access, digital identity management on Facebook, online reputation management, and data about the respondent.

The second questionnaire designed for recruiters was also broken down into four topic areas: the methods of recruitment, the digital identity of the applicant, the digital image of the applicant and the company's identification sheet. Before administering the final questionnaire, we found it necessary to test it out, that is to say, to administer it to a small number of individuals in the reference population of the study in order to identify any ambiguities or omissions. To this end, the questionnaire was pretested on a group of college students, and the final version was drafted according to their remarks and suggestions. Finally, four groups of volunteer students administered the questionnaires face to face (interviewer-respondent) in the four academic institutions mentioned above.

As for recruiters, we opted for the mailing method, which consisted of sending questionnaires by e-mail to some companies randomly selected, then calling them by phone to encourage those who did not fill in the questionnaire.

## **8. Results and Discussion**

Before presenting the main results of our surveys, and before analyzing them, we deemed it necessary to list a number of limitations we noticed when conducting our research. They could have some impact on the reliability of the results.

### *8.1 Limitations in the Students' Survey*

The first likely limitation concerns the constitution of our sample which was mainly composed of four institutions within the University Hassan II Ain Chock in Casablanca. This means that we have neglected others within the university. Our choice was based on two criteria, namely, proximity to our school, and the number of students surveyed in these institutions which represents 70% of the students enrolled in University Hassan II. The second likely limitation concerns the breakdown of our sample. It was based on the assumption that students in our sample adopted the same behavior regardless of the institution they belonged to. The third likely limitation concerns the level of students surveyed. 46.2% of the respondents were university freshmen. We can meet here a degree of unawareness of students, assuming that the more we advance in university studies the more we pay attention to our activities on internet. The fourth likely limitation relates to the fact that the majority of students did not answer the open-ended questions based on freedom of response, which was a major source of information to us.

### 8.1.1 Limitations in the Recruiters' Survey

The survey was designed to target mainly students, and the survey addressed to recruiters aimed just to complement collected data, assuming that the results we would get from students would serve a further in-depth study among recruiters. Therefore, the main limitation was noted in the weakness of the size of our sample, which consisted of 100 companies with a very high non response rate.

### 8.2 Students' Survey Finding

As mentioned above, 500 students belonging to four institutions answered our questionnaire. 54.2% of the students surveyed were between 18 and 20 years old. Girls represented more than half of the respondents (i.e., 56.6%). 46.2% were freshmen, and 24.4% were sophomore, while only 13% were postgraduate.

#### 8.2.1 Students' Connection to Internet

The majority of the students surveyed (i.e., 68.2%) have Internet access mainly through the 3G modem, 50.2% through WIFI modem, and almost a third of the respondents (i.e., 34 %) through mobile phone. More than 4 out of five students (i.e., 87%) connect to internet mainly at home, 39.4% at the university, and only 20% in a cyber café. 73.8% of the respondents use internet in order to do research and 66.8% use internet to read the news media. 53% of the respondents use internet for academic purposes and 49.8% use it for entertainment. The most famous social networks that students know are Facebook representing 95.4 % of the respondents, followed by Twitter for 70.6%, and YouTube for 69.2%. Most social networks that students at the University Hassan II use are Facebook for 96.6% of the respondents, YouTube for 80.6%, and Twitter for 34.2%. Students who have a Facebook account represent 89.6% of our sample. 58.6% of the respondents use Facebook because their friends use it. 43% of the respondents use Facebook because it is easy to operate. 41.4% use Facebook because it is the most famous social network. As for the reasons of using Facebook, three out of four students (i.e., 71%) use it to keep in touch with acquaintances. 58% of the respondents use it to meet with friends. 48.8% of the respondents use it to be updated. Finally, 41.6% of the respondents use it to express their opinion. It is interesting to note that 83.8% of the respondents use Facebook to share information, 54.4% use it to share videos, and 45.2% use it to share pictures.

#### 8.2.2 Students' Digital Identity

Nearly 3 out 4 students surveyed (i.e., 71%) show their true identity, while 42% of the students surveyed state that they never show their true identity. 49.2% of the respondents share personal information on Facebook. Half of the respondents (i.e., 50.8%) assert that they know the "online reputation" concept. However, 43.6% of the respondents confirm that they do not know anything about the ORM concept. Only 15.2% of the respondents indicate that they have "googled" their name while 35.2% have never done so. More than half of the students surveyed (i.e., 56.2%) update their status regularly against 35% who never do. For confidentiality reasons, more than two thirds of the respondents (i.e., 68.2%) regularly adjust their privacy settings against 20.2% who never do. 64.4% of the students surveyed refuse to make their account accessible to the public. 45.4% confirm that they often pay attention to the content they publish. However, only 13% of the respondents never limit the amount of information shared on them. Conversely, a little over a quarter (i.e., 26.4%) of the respondents often limit the amount of information shared on them.

These findings show clearly the benefits of the national strategy launched in 2009 by the Moroccan government, particularly in the field of education through the "Injaz" program mentioned above. It also reveals that internet is no longer a luxury for students but has become a vital tool for studies. The study shows that all students surveyed are internet users. It also confirms that Facebook is the most favorite social network to students. This backs up the figure given on the number of Facebook users in Morocco, which is 5,091,760 according to Internet World stats, 2012. Interestingly, as opposed to our hypotheses, the above findings concerning students' digital identity clearly show that students are aware of the importance of online reputation management and have a strong interest in protecting it.

#### 8.2.3 Recruiters' Survey Results

Hiring managers who responded to our survey did not exceed 50. They work for different types of companies. Almost half of the companies surveyed (i.e, 47.1%) operate in the service industry. 17.7% operate in the manufacturing industry, 5.9% operate in the agricultural sector, and 5.9% in the ICTs. More than a half of the respondents (i.e., 52.9%) use print media and Internet to advertise their job vacancies. 41.2% use recruiting forums, 41.2% use job sites, and 29.4% use social networks quite often to advertise their job vacancies. The social networks that hiring managers use to advertise job offers are Viadeo for 58.8% of the respondents, followed by LinkedIn for 47.1%, and Facebook in the third position for 29.4% of the respondents.

The most used social networks recruiters visit to learn about the candidates' profiles are mainly Viadeo for 41.2%, Facebook for 35.3%, and LinkedIn for 29.4% of the respondents. 10% of the respondents never "google" the names of candidates. 40% of the recruiters surveyed have rarely "googled" the names of candidates. 10% of the respondents have occasionally "googled" the names of candidates. 30% of the respondents have quite often "googled" the names of candidates. 10% have very often "googled" the names of candidates. 29.4 % of the respondents usually do the google search at the selection stage of the hiring process. 41.2% of the respondents generally "google" the names of candidates to complete the existing information in their résumé. 35.3% "google" the names of candidates to check the information candidates have stated in their résumé. 29.4% of the respondents "google" the names of candidates to detect any inconsistencies.

Almost a quarter of the respondents (i.e., 23.5%) believe that the information they obtain on social networks affects only rarely their choice of the candidates. 20 % of the recruiters surveyed rarely refuse candidates based on their activities on Facebook. More than a third of the recruiters surveyed (i.e., 35.3%) select candidates based on the impression they get on their personality. 29.4% of the recruiters surveyed screen the candidates' Facebook to make sure their profiles meet the requirements of the job. Equally, 29.4 % of the respondents screen the quality of expression of the candidates in their social network. 23.5% of the respondents reject candidates based on their activities in their social network. 17.7% reject candidates because of their communication style. Similarly, 17.7 % of the respondents reject candidates because of the opinions and the values that they convey.

The survey findings among recruiters show that they still favor traditional methods of recruitment. However, as opposed to our hypotheses, they are also more and more interested in new methods of recruitment using the new technology and making use of social networks to screen candidates, with Facebook in the second position.

## 9. Conclusion

Based on the literature above and our study findings, it is obvious that students will have to learn to brand and market themselves online long before starting the job hunting process. Bygone are the days when companies hired the man not the history as the American industrialist and founder of Ford Motor Company once praised in his famous quote, "it doesn't matter to me if a man is from Harvard or Sing Sing. We hire the man, not his history". Tom Peters' famous article "*The brand called You*" released in a 1997 issue of Fast Company magazine is more relevant than ever:

*It's time for me -- and you -- to take a lesson from the big brands, a lesson that's true for anyone who's interested in what it takes to stand out and prosper in the new world of work. Regardless of age, regardless of position, regardless of the business we happen to be in, all of us need to understand the importance of branding. We are CEOs of our own companies: Me Inc. To be in business today, our most important job is to be head marketer for the brand called You. (Peters, 1997, para.2)*

Today online reputation matters to employers. Therefore, college students who will be tomorrow's job candidates will have to submit more than just a resume. Besides good grades, great results, recommendation letters, a well done CV, a covering letter and diverse extra-curricular activities, students should exhibit a perfectly well managed online reputation. Their history should reflect positively on their personal brand, which has become a defining feature of online life for internet users.

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